

Public Health Department,  
St. Paul's House,  
Park Street,  
TAUNTON.

12th January, 1942.

# ANNUAL REPORT

of the Medical Officer of Health  
for the Borough of Taunton for the year 1940.

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## SUMMARY OF STATISTICS.

|                                                                               |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Registrar General's estimate of resident population for mid-year 1940.        | 30,700.   |
| Number of inhabited houses at the end of 1940 according to the Rate Book.     | 8,090.    |
| Rateable Value at the end of 1940.                                            | £228,106. |
| Sum represented by a penny rate.-                                             | £874.     |
| Birth Rate live.                                                              | 13.8      |
| " " still.                                                                    | 0.5       |
| " " illegitimate.                                                             | 0.7       |
| Death Rate, crude = 14.8, corrected by factor 0.95=                           | 14.0      |
| Infant Mortality Rate. Total.                                                 | 55.9      |
| " " " Legitimate.                                                             | 54.1      |
| " " " Illegitimate.                                                           | 90.9      |
| Death Rate (per 1,000 births) from Diarrhoea in infants under 2 years of age. | 6.7       |

## GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.

The premises provided for and used as a Health Centre were taken over by the Somerset County Council for use as a First Aid Post and the services which were provided here were removed to temporary premises at North Street Sunday School on 23rd September, 1939.

Services provided here include:-

Infant Welfare Centre - open Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2-4 p.m.

Ante-Natal and Post-Natal Clinic - Monday and Wednesday 2-4 p.m.

Minor Ailments Clinic - Each weekday, with doctor attending from 9-11 a.m.

Dental Clinic - open 9-12 and 2-4 on school days and on Saturday mornings for general and aesthetics.

Eye Clinic - Two sessions on a Tuesday in each month by appointment.

## MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

Ante-Natal Clinic. The numbers attending increased so that it was not possible to deal with them properly in one session a week, and an extra session on Monday afternoons commenced on 16th December this being taken by the Assistant Medical Officer, Dr. Roper.

The total number of ante-natal women seen was 318 and 9 women attended for post-natal examination while under an arrangement with private medical practitioners 9 women were examined at the request of the midwife they had booked.

### Obstetric Consultants.

Application for this service was made by private medical practitioners for 17 cases.

### Maternity Home.

The normal number of beds was 6 but these were increased to 10 in September, 1939 by placing 4 beds in the recently erected night nursery. These 10 beds have been maintained. The number admitted for lying-in was 179 while 15 women were also admitted for ante-natal treatment.

### Infant Welfare Centres.

It was decided to provide an additional centre to serve the council houses numbering almost 1,000 in the Lambrook and Halcon areas. Rooms in Halcon Baptist Chapel were rented for this purpose and the first session held on Wednesday afternoon, the 3rd July. Sessions have continued since this date on Wednesday afternoons.

Sessions were also held on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at North Street Sunday School in the afternoons.

The total attendances numbered 3,226, with 453 new infants brought for consultation.

### Work of the Health Visitors.

It had been apparent before the outbreak of war that it was difficult for one Health Visitor to deal with the work and the increase in population consequent upon the war made it essential to increase the staff for this purpose. An additional Health Visitor giving half time to Maternity and Child Welfare work and the other half to School Nursing duties was appointed and commenced duty on the 15th May. They paid a total of 4,170 visits to homes in connection with the welfare of women and infants.

### Births.

The total number notified under Section 203 of the Public Health Act, 1926 was 508 and these included 27 still births.

### Infant Mortality.

Deaths of infants under 1 year of age numbered 25, giving an Infant Mortality Rate of 55.9. Thirteen of these occurred in the first week of life and include 3 due to premature birth and 3 to congenital defects. This exceeds the figure of 54.0 for 148 smaller towns.

### Puerperal Pyrexia.

Six cases of this condition were notified. Four of these were removed to the Isolation Hospital. There were no deaths from puerperal sepsis.

## SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

### Water Supply.

In consequence of the drought it was found necessary to restrict the supply from Sunday, 11th August to Saturday, 23rd November when restriction was removed.

Samples for bacteriological examination by the Bacteriologist of the Somerset County Council were taken at weekly intervals. The water is chlorinated, but six of the samples were unsatisfactory for a chlorinated water and indicated that the filtration and chlorination was not effective at these times.

An additional source of supply from Otterhead came into use in October, the water being pumped into Priors Park dam and thence into Luxhay reservoir.

### Meat Supply.

Under Section 57 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938 all slaughter houses were to be regarded as licensed until the 1st February when applications for renewals were to be considered. A Government scheme for centralised slaughter had however been put into operation on the 22nd January so that all food animals except pigs for bacon were killed and prepared at Bowerman's slaughterhouse in Upper High Street and taken to Dorset's slaughterhouse, East Reach for distribution, while the West Somerset Dairy & Bacon Co. continued as a bacon factory. Under these circumstances the use of the remaining slaughterhouses for this purpose ceased.

## NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The number of cases notified of the following diseases with the rate per 1,000 population and for comparison the rate per 1,000 for 148 smaller towns are:-

|                       | <u>Taunton.</u> |                     | <u>148 Smaller Towns.</u> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
|                       | Cases notified. | Rate per 1,000 pop. | Rate per 1,000            |
| Scarlet Fever.        | 160             | 5.21                | 1.57                      |
| Diphtheria.           | 8               | 0.25                | 1.21                      |
| Cerebro-spinal Fever. | 23              | 0.74                | 0.29                      |
| Whooping Cough.       | 57              | 1.85                | 1.35                      |
| Measles.              | 196             | 6.38                | 9.99                      |

It will be seen that Scarlet Fever and Cerebro-spinal Fever were more prevalent than in other similar towns.

## DIPHTHERIA PROPHYLAXIS.

Examination of the returns showed that up to the 31st December only 9.8% of the children under 5 years numbering 2,220 and only 4.6% of the children aged 5 to 15 years and numbering 4,450 had been treated. After receiving circular 2230 on 10th December advising special efforts to increase the number protected, arrangements were made to offer this to all children in the public elementary schools and to give special sessions each week for those under school age.

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and  
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